

REFERENCE GUIDE OF WASHINGTON FIRMS

CORDELL B. MICHAELO
IN HOUSE LIBRARY

Herculean Task Accomplished by Mr. Boobar.

EVERY BOOK READY TO HAND

Librarian Found Topsy-Turvy Conditions—Every Document Now Under Card Index.

Bringing order out of chaos never had an after meaning than in the Herculean task just accomplished by John J. Boobar, Librarian of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Boobar, who took charge of the House library three years ago, has redoubled his efforts this summer during the dull season to bring to a conclusion the extensive improvements which he undertook for the immense document room containing over 225,000 volumes, covering a half acre of space.

Ready to Hand.

When Congress convenes again this fall Representatives desiring to delve into the archives of the past will be astonished to find the former dusty old document rooms transformed into a thing of beauty. The search for books is made so easy that undoubtedly the library will enjoy a big increase in popularity.

The House library has an interesting history. Many unique characters were connected with it. Among them was "Bully" Smith, an old-time negro, who was employed as the place boy, but in reality was the only one who could ever find a book in the topsy-turvy shelves. In consequence, he enjoyed the esteem and patronage of those old-time leaders who roamed about the archive rooms looking for records with which to back up their arguments.

It is said that old Billy Smith accomplished the feat of locating books by sheer force of memory. At that time there was no special system for the arrangement of the volumes and the various records of Congress, and legislative documents were tucked away in many odd places. When a Representative desired a document, he would hunt for it until he found it, or he would ask Billy Smith to find it for him.

A Complete Record.

Few people have any idea of the great extent of the House library. It contains copies of all the printed proceedings pertaining to sessions of Congress.

At present fourteen duplicate copies of each House document are kept on file. Formerly there were fifty of each. Even in those days nearly all the space was choked up.

Up in a little loft that overlooks Statuary Hall, where few people would notice it, Mr. Boobar, the librarian, now holds his way. Far down below in the basement, about a quarter of a mile away, Mr. Boobar has another domain.

It is in the upper office, however, that he transacts most of his business. It is in this document room that he keeps the latest issues. He usually has enough on hand to supply all the needs of members. The basement library is known as the "reserve." This extends all the way under the Capitol and covers half an acre. In it are stored an immense number of books. A very different scene is presented there now than what formerly existed.

Task Seemed Impossible.

"When I first went down in that basement three years ago," said Mr. Boobar, "I thought I had an almost impossible task before me. The room was so full of dust that at the opening of the door it flew up in my face and nearly choked me."

"Half a century's dust lay on the floor and on the books nearly an inch deep. There was furthermore little evidence of any attempt on the part of those who had charge of it to arrange the books with any semblance of regularity. Most of the books were kicking around the floor like so many blocks of wood."

"I saw at once that it was necessary to get the place clean and new before anything could be done in the matter of arrangement. So I had one of the rooms completely emptied. I then began the work of sorting all the rest of the basement library, with the clean room as a sort of reservoir."

Too Many and Too Few.

"We found to begin with that there were a totally unnecessary number of some books and too few of another. As Congress has made the provision that the Government Printing Office shall issue only fourteen copies of each volume to the House library, instead of fifty, as before, I decided to adopt that as my regular standard. The superfluous old books, therefore, I sent back to the printing office to be sent out to the various repositories. The others I had carefully collected and rebounded."

"We have now a complete chain of every document of the Congress ever issued. Members, furthermore, are assisted by a modern card system, which enables the librarian to lay his hand on a book at a moment's notice."

Recorded and Protected.

"In the basement we have adopted the plan of wrapping up each book in a paper parcel. On the back of this is stamped its number, according to the catalogue. It is a very simple matter to locate the book, while at the same time the paper keeps it clean and new."

"It is very interesting to note how the volumes vary for the different Congresses. For the First Congress, held in 1789, I have here an octavo volume of 650 pages. That contains all the records made at a note of that memorable occasion."

"Contrast that with the records of our last session, for instance, where a single issue for twelve volumes is required, on the shelf, and each of these volumes is an octavo, with 1,000 pages each. Of course the stenographic form of reporting has aided in the increase."

"We find that the fourteen copies now issued is amply sufficient. I hope now to have everything so systematized that the library will prove what it should be, a complete and ready reference for members of Congress, who desire to search in records of the past."

JULES VERNE AT HOME.

Jules Verne rises early, like most successful writers, and has accomplished his day's work before noon. The afternoon he devotes to a study of the newspapers and magazines. "I read twenty journals a day," he told me, "and he finds there the material for his romantic voyages. He began life with thoughts of the law. He studied the manuals of the jurisconsults to please his parents; but he wrote plays in verse to please himself. It is difficult to imagine the well ordered family and scientific precision of a Jules Verne harnessed to so runaway a steed as the dramatic Muse. He wrote at least a dozen poetical dramas, none of which he declared, with a tinge of sadness in his tone, saw the light. Jules Verne even wrote an historical drama founded on the English gunpowder plot.—The Pall Mall.

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